



The Language of Leadership: An Investigation of School Heads' Illocutionary Acts in an SPTA Meeting

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Joseph L. Torres

University of the Visayas, Main Campus, Cebu City, Philippines

Abstract

Leadership plays a vital role in any organization but without communicative pedagogies, it may lead to ineffective leadership. This study aimed to investigate the school heads' illocutionary acts in the context of SPTA meetings in North District, Tanjay City Division, the school year 2024-2025. Through purposive sampling, eight school heads were qualified to participate in the study based on the qualifications set by the researcher. Moreover, a descriptive qualitative method was utilized as an appropriate method for the scope and the nature of the study. A consented audio recording of the participants' verbatims during the first quarter SPTA meetings was utilized and analyzed through the five categories of illocutionary acts introduced by Searle in 1976. To emphasize the descriptive nature of the analysis, frequency and percentage distribution were utilized. Based on the findings, school heads' utterances pertained to all categories of illocutionary acts but among the five, it was evident that representatives obtained the highest percentage as demonstrated by 40.97%. This emphasized the importance of sharing information and involving stakeholders for effective learning outcomes. Thus, all the categories evident in the study were found to have a vital role in the school heads' effective language of leadership. Thus, the findings suggest that school heads should continue to use communicative styles and strategies to promote awareness and cooperation in the landscape of the school community.

Keywords: *Descriptive qualitative research; utterances, illocutionary acts*

Introduction

Every organization needs someone to lead; a head that takes a crucial role in influencing the members to achieve goals and promote effective communication among people in an organization. Like any other groups and sectors, schools too, need human resources to facilitate positive change toward development and learning. In this sense, the presence and the lead role of the school head is imperative. His/her responsibility embraces a holistic approach since the academe has a wide range of factors influencing its success (Ellis, 2022). This means that merely having a school head may not suffice the needs of the school, learners, teachers, and stakeholders. Communication is the key to achieving understanding and success in an organization. It is essential for fostering a supportive and effective work atmosphere where team members can collaborate successfully to achieve shared objectives. A clear and succinct exchange of ideas, information, and criticism is a necessary component of effective communication (Ahmed, 2019). A school head's communication style is essential. The effectiveness and general climate of a school can be significantly impacted by the way its head of school interacts with its stakeholders. To keep everyone informed and involved, the head of the school must have an effective communication style. Setting the tone for the entire school community is one of the key reasons and the communication style of the head of the school matters. When the school head communicates honestly and efficiently with all stakeholders, it promotes a sense of transparency and trust inside the school. Better ties between the principal, instructors, parents, students, and other school community members may result from this (Angela, 2024). Additionally, good communication makes sure that everyone agrees and pursues the same objectives. All parties involved in the school's operations are more likely to work together to achieve its objectives when the head of the school properly communicates the institution's vision, mission, and goals. This may result in better student performance, happier instructors and staff, and more parental and community involvement. This is substantiated by the study of Talaumbauna et al. (2023) titled, *Principal's Communication Style and its Impact on the Performance of State Civil Apparatus*. The study revealed that by using an effective communication style, the principal encourages teachers, fosters collaboration, establishes trust, and works together to address difficulties. Moreover, the study of Sofia et al. (2023) about the *Principal's Effective Communication and Teacher Performance: A Classroom Perspective*. The finding shows that the principal employed effective principles such as informative and intrapersonal communication. These principles have been implemented well and improved the relationships among teachers and the principal.

On the other hand, an ineffective or lack of communication style may cause problems in the field. A school head's ineffective communication approach with the school community can have several detrimental effects. Any company, including schools, needs effective communication because it fosters relationship-building, information-sharing, and a healthy work environment. Ineffective or broken communication can lead to miscommunication, disputes, and a



lack of trust within the school community (S, 2023). It is therefore important that school heads should be resourceful and strategic in terms of information dissemination to the school community. This includes how the school heads use language toward the audience and the intended function or purpose it conveys. This context is associated with the theory of speech acts. Speech act theory is a branch of pragmatics that focuses on the use of words to perform activities as well as convey information. Oxford philosopher J.L. proposed the speech act hypothesis. Austin in "How to Do Things With Words" and further refined by American philosopher John Searle. It considers the extent to which statements are attributed with performing locutionary, illocutionary, or perlocutionary behaviors (Nordquist, 2024). A locutionary act is simply an utterance that conveys meaning while the illocutionary act is the social function of what is being asked. Under this social act, five functions can be categorized as Representatives, Directives, Expressive, Commissive, and Declarations (Searle, 1976). Representative remarks obligate the speaker (to a differing extent) to anything being accurate and represent the truth. The speaker presents the world as they perceive it to make it conform to their way of thinking. This kind of illocutionary deed can take the shape of a description, assertion, conclusion, statement, or report. Moreover, trying to persuade the audience to perform a specific activity is called directives. In this act, the speaker intends to persuade the audience to act in the future. An example of the type of illocutionary is asking questions, commanding, ordering, supplicating, inviting, counseling, granting, and pleading. On the other hand, commissives require the speaker to act in the future and take some responsibility for the speaker's actions. It conveys the speaker's intention to do something. Additionally, this can be performed through promising, threatening, and offering. Another classification of illocutionary acts is so-called, Expressives. Emotive words are used to describe the mental state that the sincerity condition suggests. This type of nonverbal behavior can be as in expressing gratitude, congrats, regret, sympathy, lamenting, and welcoming. Lastly, declaratives intend to change the state or status of the subjects to which they pertain, but only after the statement is finished. All of the mentioned illocutionary acts portray different social functions. Consequently, these acts lead to certain effects on the audience. As a result of what is said, utterances affect the perception and the behavior of the intended audience which is called the perlocutionary act.

The role of the school heads is vital and their ability to influence the stakeholders in their respective schools using their communication style is indeed beneficial toward achieving organizational goals. In this regard, this study dwells on the speech acts, particularly focusing on the school heads' illocutionary acts during the first quarter of School Parent-Teacher Association meetings in their respective schools within the North District of Tanjay City Division school year 2024-2025. Upon the analysis of this study, the results will help administrators and school leaders to reflect and assess their communicative styles toward becoming effective communicators. Thus, this study aims to address the following questions.

1. What are the social functions of the school heads' utterances?
2. How do school heads convey the intention of their utterances?
3. What social function is dominant in the school heads' utterances?
4. Why do school heads use this social function most of the time?
5. Based on the findings, what recommendation can be made?

Methodology

This section describes the research design, research locale, participants, instrument, methods for collecting data, and ethical considerations of the study.

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design. This design is used to describe details on a subject matter focusing on what, where, when, how, and why. It tries to determine the characteristics of a population or phenomenon. Moreover, it allows researchers to find patterns in a group's traits, which essentially answers questions (*Descriptive Research Design: What It Is and How to Use It*, 2023). In this connection, the method applies the intention of the researcher to describe the school heads' speech acts, particularly their utterances and the classification of social functions they belong during their PTA meetings.

Research Locale

One of the most essential considerations in conducting research is the identification of the research locale. It is the actual site where a research investigation is carried out. It is a significant component of any research effort since it is essential to both the process of gathering data and the final product of the investigation. Moreover, the validity and reliability of the research findings might be significantly impacted by the location of the study. Choosing a location that is both easily accessible to the required data and pertinent to the research topic is crucial (JordanHular, 2024). Relatively, the locale in this study is within the schools under the North District of Tanjay City Division of the school year 2024-2025. The setting of the gathering of data depends on the school heads' choice as they conduct their SPTA first-quarter meetings.



Research Participants

An essential component of academics and other fields is research. It entails gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data to learn more about and comprehend a certain subject in greater detail. In this regard, participants have a significant impact on the research process in addition to researchers, who are essential to the research itself. They are persons who contribute data or information to a study that the researcher gathers and examines. Participants' involvement is essential to the research process, particularly in qualitative studies because the primary data sets are shaped by the experiences, viewpoints, and opinions of the participants. Depending on the size and purpose of the study, this information may be gathered at the individual, group, or even organizational level (Stewart, 2024). In this study, the selection of participants was based on the criteria set by the researcher. These are as follows: a) a secondary school head, and b) a school head within North District, Tanjay City Division. There were thirteen secondary schools in Tanjay City Division and through purposive random sampling, eight school heads were chosen.

Research Instrument

In the realm of research, instruments are essential since they help with data collection, analysis, and interpretation. To accomplish a study's goals, these tools are made to assess variables, collect data, or make experimentation easier. Instruments, which include everything from lab equipment and technical devices to surveys and questionnaires, are essential to the research process because they give researchers the ability to collect accurate and trustworthy data. In the realm of research, instruments are essential since they help with data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Ruellicanto, 2023). In this study, the researcher utilized the recorded verbatims of the school heads in their respective PTA meetings and a self-made interview guide to substantiate the data collected.

Data Gathering Procedures

The methodical process of obtaining, calculating, and documenting data for study, analysis, or decision-making is known as data collection. Gathering pertinent and trustworthy information entails gathering data from a variety of sources, including surveys, interviews, observations, experiments, papers, and databases that are already in existence (Data Collection, 2024). In this sense, this study observed tripartite procedures namely, pre-, during, and post-gathering data. In the pre-data gathering phase, the researcher drafted a list of participants utilizing purposive random sampling. After, the researcher sent a permission letter addressed to the Schools Division Superintendent of Tanjay City Division. After approval and consent from the participants, the data gathering commenced. The consent contained the nature and the significance of the study and how the data will be collected. During the collection of data, the researcher humbly instructed the participants to record their dialogue while conducting their respective PTA meetings. In this adherence, the researcher practiced the rigor of qualitative research. The term "qualitative rigor" describes the research's attention to detail, coherence, and transparency. It is the use of methodical, rigorous, and disciplined techniques to guarantee the trustworthiness of the methods and procedures used in a study. To make it trustworthy, the researcher employed the criteria set by Lincoln and Guba in 1985 namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Rigor and Transparency in Research | Explanation & Guide, 2024). In terms of credibility, the researcher utilized recorded utterances of the school heads to transcribe accurately. Also, in the observation of transferability, the researcher employed a thick description that described the characteristics of participants, location, and context of the study. This was necessary for future reference if the findings of the study can be applied in different circumstances. Moreover, the researcher audited all the procedures in conducting the research until reaching the results of the study. This is for dependability purposes. Lastly, for confirmability purposes, the researcher objectively transcribed the recorded verbatims of the participants. No matter what the utterances were, they were strictly transcribed without filters and the personal bias of the researcher. All these rigors were followed by the researcher to ensure the trustworthiness of the research outcomes (S. K. Ahmed, 2024). Consequently, the treatment of the data gathered materialized in the post-gathering phase. In this stage, the researcher tallied all the utterances, and the corresponding social functions used by the school heads which will be supported by the experiences extracted from the interview made by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Since data analysis is essential to drawing relevant conclusions and insights from the obtained data, it is a critical component of the research process. The quality and reliability of research findings would be compromised in the absence of adequate data analysis. Data analysis is an essential component of the research process because it is responsible for extracting significant results and conclusions from the data that has been gathered. Researchers would find it difficult to interpret their data properly without competent data analysis, which would jeopardize the validity and consistency of their research conclusions (Staff, 2024). In this study, the researcher employed the classification of illocutionary acts by John Searle in 1976 namely, Representatives, Directives, Expressive, Commissives, and Declarations. This was used to categorize the utterances of the participants. Moreover, the descriptive nature of the study pertains to the description of these utterances through frequency and percentage distribution. Thus, an interview was also necessary to support the findings.



Ethical Considerations

In carrying out this investigation, the researcher adhered to ethical protocols. First, the investigator obtained the participants' informed permission, which was clarified. The consent described the purpose and scope of the research and stressed that participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that participants could discontinue at any time. Second, the volunteers were explained to by the researchers why their anonymity was so important. and the discreet manner in which their identity was handled. The identity of the participants was denoted by codes. Finally, it was made explicit that the researcher alone had access to the participants' master list.

Results

In this section, all the findings are yielded and interpreted based on the sequential treatment of the data. Moreover, the data is interpreted and highlighted to understand the implications of the study.

Table 1. Illocutionary acts of School Head A

Illocutionary Acts	Frequency	Percentage
Representatives	11	34.38
Directives	6	18.75
Expressives	7	21.88
Commissives	5	15.63
Declarations	3	9.38
Total number of	32	100

The table shows that the utterances of school head A amounted to 32 meaningful statements and most of them pertained to representatives as demonstrated by 34.38%. On the other hand, declarations got the lowest percentage as demonstrated by 9.38 %.

Table 2. Illocutionary acts of School Head B

Illocutionary Acts	Frequency	Percentage
Representatives	24	53.33
Directives	8	17.78
Expressives	6	13.33
Commissives	5	11.11
Declarations	2	4.44
Total number of	45	100

As can be seen from the table, school head B made 45 significant statements, the majority of which (53.33%) were about representation. However, as evidenced by the 4.44% proportion, declarations received the lowest percentage.

Table 3. Illocutionary acts of School Head C

Illocutionary Acts	Frequency	Percentage
Representatives	21	42
Directives	13	26
Expressives	4	8
Commissives	8	16
Declarations	4	8
Total number of	50	100

According to the data, school head C made 50 significant statements. Out of 45 meaningful utterances, 42% are categorized under representatives. On the other hand, as evidenced by 8%, expressives and declarations received the lowest percentage.

Table 4. Illocutionary acts of School Head D

Illocutionary Acts	Frequency	Percentage
Representatives	32	40.51
Directives	20	25.32
Expressives	7	8.86
Commissives	11	13.92
Declarations	9	11.39
Total number of	79	100



The data shows that school head D made 32 important statements. 40.51% of the 79 meaningful statements fall into the representative category. Conversely, expressives obtained the lowest percentage, as shown by 8.86%.

Table 5. Illocutionary acts of School Head E

Illocutionary Acts	Frequency	Percentage
Representatives	26	43.33
Directives	12	20.00
Expressives	7	11.67
Commissives	10	16.67
Declarations	5	8.33
Total number of	60	100

The table illustrates that 60 utterances were made by the school head E. Most of these statements are categorized under representatives as demonstrated by 43.33%. On the contrary, declarations got the lowest percentage as evidenced by 8.33%.

Table 6. Illocutionary acts of School Head F

Illocutionary Acts	Frequency	Percentage
Representatives	30	41.67
Directives	18	25.00
Expressives	8	11.11
Commissives	10	13.89
Declarations	6	8.33
Total number of	71	100

The data shows that the school head F made a total of 71 utterances. The majority of these statements pertained to representatives as illustrated by 41.67%. However, with 8.33%, declarations obtained the lowest percentage.

Table 7. Illocutionary acts of School Head F

Illocutionary Acts	Frequency	Percentage
Representatives	28	48.28
Directives	12	20.69
Expressives	5	8.62
Commissives	7	12.07
Declarations	6	10.34
Total number of	58	100

Based on the data, school head F made 58 meaningful utterances. Most of the utterances fell under the category of representatives as shown by 48.28%. On the other hand, declarations obtained the lowest percentage as demonstrated by 10.34%.

Table 8. Illocutionary acts of School Head G

Illocutionary Acts	Frequency	Percentage
Representatives	34	43.59
Directives	17	21.79
Expressives	10	12.82
Commissives	12	15.38
Declarations	5	6.41
Total number of	78	100

The table shows that school head H made a total of 78 utterances. This also illustrated that the category representatives got the highest percentage as evidenced by 43.59%. On the contrary, declarations obtained the lowest percentage as demonstrated by 6.41%.

Table 8. General illocutionary acts of school heads in North District

Illocutionary Acts	Frequency	Percentage
Representatives	186	40.97
Directives	106	23.35
Expressives	54	11.89
Commissives	68	14.98
Declarations	40	8.81
Total number of	454	100



The table shows that the school heads of North District in Tanjay City Division made 454 total meaningful utterances. This also illustrates that most of their utterances pertained to the category of representatives which averaged 186 utterances and is demonstrated by 40.97%. However, among the five categories, declarations obtained the lowest average and percentage which is represented by 40 utterances and is equal to 8.81%.

Discussion

According to the data, school heads exhibited utterances as a way of communicating with stakeholders in their respective schools. Evidently, all the illocutionary acts used by the participants were present namely, representatives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives. In expressing representatives, the participants convey the social functions of their utterances by informing, stating, asserting what they believed, and reporting important matters relevant to the school's programs and achievements. Also, in the directives, participants used to ask questions and request approaches for consultation and clarification purposes. Conversely, participants convey expressives by thanking the parents for their constant support given to the school and congratulating everybody for the first quarter's accomplishments. Moreover, to hope for continued assistance and relationships between the school and parents, school heads show commissives by empowering everyone through optimistic actions such as acceptance and promises to achieve better results in the future. Lastly, aside from other social functions found in the participants' verbatims, they also used declarations such as uttering policies with conviction and pronouncing the obligations and shared responsibilities between the school and parents. Consequently, among the five categories, representatives were emphasized as the highest obtained average as shown by 186 utterances which is equivalent to 40.97%. This result is supported by the participant's point of view. According to them, they highly emphasized the use of representatives since they are in the field, and it is their job to report, assert, and inform the things to the parents that are imperative to the learners' education and the success of the implementation of the school projects and programs. Moreover, they substantiated that the success of achieving goals in the schools depends on the information-dissemination system. This statement is corroborated by the study of Şahin (2021) which revealed that school administrators practice the dissemination of information to teachers, as stakeholders too, to bring the best result in learning and achieve curricular goals. Although giving information is an essential element of successful communication, it needs to be coupled with a stimulus that influences action. In this sense, the data shows that school heads also used directives as the second highest average amounting to 106 utterances and is equivalent to 23.35%. According to the participants, in the context of achieving learning and holistic success in education, it is important to ask and consult stakeholders. It provides the opportunity for the stakeholders to be heard in their ideas and participate in the decision-making process (B2B International & Written by B2B International, 2018). The success of any educational implementation is a direct result of a joint effort of the school heads and stakeholders. In this sense, the participants needed to express their gratitude to the parents for them to be appreciated and feel that they have a vital role to play in shaping the learners' education. According to Cenay (2022), saying thanks to people improves mental health and promotes well-being. Moreover, the participants also expressed their congratulatory gestures to the parents and teachers for the result of the first quarter of School Monitoring Evaluation and Adjustment (SMEA). Likewise, according to the school heads, congratulating everyone makes the relationship stronger and promotes teamwork and acknowledgment. Acknowledging these accomplishments also fosters a culture of cooperation and acknowledgment and boosts team spirit (Salah, 2024). As evident in the table, school heads made 54 utterances under the category of expressives which is equal to 11.89%. Consequently, part of the communicative styles of the participants to establish relationships and commitments toward the parents was the use of utterances that represented acceptance and promise. Beyond self-gratification, promises to have a powerful motivational impact. When we commit to a future activity, it becomes more tangible and realistic, which triggers a chain of thought processes that raise our chances of doing it (Psychologists Magazine, 2023). Based on the general finding, school heads commissives amounted to 68 meaningful utterances which is equivalent to 14.98%. Lastly, in terms of the declaratives, only 40 utterances were made by the school heads which is demonstrated by 8.81%. According to their point of view, declaratives are also necessary not just to alter things but to impose power at the same time. A school head needs to be strong but responsible in his/her words to lead efficiently in the organization. A leader's word choice determines the declaration's power. Developing an engaging story that affects attitudes, feelings, and behavior is more important than simply issuing commands or providing information. A leader's vision, principles, and goals are embodied in declarations, which are more than just utterances. Leaders can influence reality when they express a vision or goal (Gautane, 2023).

Conclusion

The findings of this study concluded that school heads' utterances pertained to all categories of illocutionary acts in the context of School Parent Teacher Association (SPTA) meetings namely, representatives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives. It was evident that school heads' utterances conveyed the meaning of their utterances by informing, stating, asserting, reporting, asking questions, requesting, thanking, congratulating, accepting, promising, and declaring things imperative to their objective in communicating with the parents. Consequently, upon analysis, the most common medium of illocutionary acts is known to be representatives. This emphasized how crucial it is to share information and involve stakeholders to promote effective learning outcomes and cooperative



relationships in the school community at large. Moreover, all other categories of illocutionary acts were found to have a significant role in the school heads' communicative style toward achieving educational goals. As a recommendation, the findings suggest that school heads should continue to practice information dissemination and other communicative strategies to efficiently work with stakeholders in the school community. Research-wise, this study focused only on the context of SPTA meetings. For future researchers, focusing on a specific agenda of the meetings will be more objective. Moreover, method and instrument-wise, researchers may use an exploratory mixed method where qualitative data is supported with quantitative data to enrich the study.

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